

# News

United States  
Department  
of Labor



---

**Bureau of Labor Statistics**

**Dallas, TX 75202**

---

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**  
Cheryl Abbot, Regional Economist  
(214) 767-6970  
<http://www.bls.gov/ro6/home.htm>

**For Release:**  
**Thursday, August 18, 2005**

## **AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN ARKANSAS: FOURTH QUARTER 2004** **Washington County ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in wage growth nationwide**

In the fourth quarter of 2004, the average weekly wage in Washington County rose 10.6 percent over the year to \$668, the largest increase in Arkansas among its three counties with 75,000 or more jobs. Pulaski County recorded the highest wage level at \$757 per week, followed by Benton County at \$726. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that the weekly wage levels in all three of Arkansas' large counties were above the statewide average of \$623. (See table 1.)

### Over-the-year wage changes

Washington County's 10.6-percent wage gain was well above the 5.7-percent increase for the nation in the fourth quarter 2004, ranking 6<sup>th</sup> highest among the 317 large counties in the country. The 6.9-percent wage growth in Benton County ranked 73<sup>rd</sup>, placing it among the top one-fourth in the rankings. While Pulaski County registered the slowest increase among the three large Arkansas counties at 5.6 percent, its wage gain about equaled the national average and ranked 139<sup>th</sup> in the country.

Leading the nation in average weekly wage growth was Williamson County, Texas, with an increase of 17.8 percent. Rock Island, Ill., was second with 14.8-percent growth, followed by the counties of Ventura, Calif. (12.6 percent), Henrico, Va. (12.5 percent), and St. Louis, Minn. (11.0 percent). At the bottom of the rankings were five counties that experienced wage gains of 1.0 percent or less: Kalamazoo County, Mich. (0.5 percent), Richmond, N.Y. (0.7 percent), Macomb and Genesee, Mich. (both at 0.9 percent), and Ingham, Mich. (1.0 percent). No large county experienced a decline in its average weekly wage.

At the state level, the average weekly wage in Arkansas grew 6.0 percent from the fourth quarter of 2003 to the fourth quarter of 2004, the 14<sup>th</sup> highest wage increase among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. (Illinois and Pennsylvania also had a 6.0-percent wage gain and, as a result, the same ranking.) Minnesota led the U.S. in over-the-year wage growth at 7.5 percent. Delaware and Virginia were next in line with increases of 7.0 and 6.9 percent, respectively. These states were followed by California (6.7 percent), Hawaii (6.6 percent), and Idaho (6.6 percent). Vermont reported the slowest increase in wages in the nation at 2.3 percent; no state reported a decline. (See table 2.)

## Average Weekly Wages in Arkansas, Fourth Quarter 2004 (continued)

### Wage levels

While the three large Arkansas counties were in the top half of the national rankings in wage growth, they placed in the bottom half when ranked by average weekly wage level, with all falling below the national average of \$812. Pulaski County, which had the slowest over-the-year wage gain among the large Arkansas counties, recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$757 in the fourth quarter 2004, ranking it 161<sup>st</sup> among the 317 large counties nationwide. Benton County reported an average weekly wage of \$726, ranking it 201<sup>st</sup>. Washington County, which ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation in wage growth, ranked 263<sup>rd</sup> in wages, at \$668 per week. (See table 1.)

Among the 317 large counties in the nation, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$1,608. Santa Clara, Calif., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,460, followed by Fairfield, Conn. (\$1,430), and Suffolk, Mass. (\$1,363). Three of the ten counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., and Somerset, N.J.), three others were located in or around the San Francisco area (Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco, all in California), while three more were located in or around the Washington D.C. metropolitan area (Washington, D.C., Arlington, Va., and Fairfax, Va.). Rounding out the top10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area. At the other end of the wage scale, the lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron, Texas (\$500), followed by Hidalgo, Texas (\$504), Webb, Texas (\$540), Yakima, Wash. (\$541), and Horry, S.C. (\$558). The wage level in the lowest-ranked county, Cameron, was less than one-third the level reported for the highest-ranked county, New York.

On a statewide level, the average weekly wage in Arkansas was \$623, more than 20 percent below the national average. This placed Arkansas 45<sup>th</sup> in the rankings among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Arkansas' weekly wage was close to levels in neighboring Oklahoma (\$627, 44<sup>th</sup>) and Louisiana (\$658, 39<sup>th</sup>), but well below wages in other nearby states including Missouri (\$709, 30<sup>th</sup>) and Tennessee (\$728, 25<sup>th</sup>). (See table 2.)

Nationwide, average wage levels were greater than \$1,000 per week for the top five in the rankings: District of Columbia (\$1,305), Connecticut (\$1,056), New York (\$1,016), Massachusetts (\$1,007), and New Jersey (\$1,001). Average weekly wages in this group were more than 20 percent above the national average. At the other end of the scale, four states reported wages below \$600 per week -- or less than 75 percent of the national average: Montana (\$572), South Dakota (\$581), Mississippi (\$586), and North Dakota (\$599).

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.4 million employer reports cover 130.2 million full- and part-time jobs. The average weekly wage is computed by dividing the total quarterly payroll of employees covered by UI programs by the average monthly number of these employees. This number then is divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan

## Average Weekly Wages in Arkansas, Fourth Quarter 2004 (continued)

areas, or States for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas, counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Note below) and will not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

### Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2003* is available for sale from the BLS Publications Sales Center, P.O. Box 2145, Chicago, Illinois 60690, telephone 312-353-1880. The bulletin is now available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn03.htm>. Also, the quarterly press release, County Employment and Wages, presents employment and wage data for the largest counties in the U.S. and is available at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>.

QCEW-based news releases issued by other regional offices have been placed at one convenient BLS Web site location, see <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.htm>.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Covered Employment and Wages Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Dallas Information Office at 214-767-6970 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT. This release is available in text and PDF format on the Dallas BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/ro6/home.htm>. Users may also obtain the release from the Bureau's fax-on-demand service in Dallas by dialing 214-767-9613 and requesting document number 9560.

### **NOTE**

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review, and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

**Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 3 largest counties in Arkansas, fourth quarter 2004 (2)**

Area	Employment	Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	December 2004 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, 2003-04 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6).....	131,560.7	812	-	5.7	-
Arkansas.....	1,149.1	623	-	6.0	-
Benton, AR.....	87.2	726	201	6.9	73
Pulaski, AR.....	245.7	757	161	5.6	139
Washington, AR.....	87.8	668	263	10.6	6

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(5) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for any noneconomic county reclassifications.

(6) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

**Table 2. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2004 (2)**

State	Employment	Average weekly wage (3)			
	December 2004 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, 4th quarter 2003-04	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (5).....	131,560.7	\$812	-	5.7	-
Alabama.....	1,882.0	695	32	5.8	21
Alaska.....	288.4	780	18	4.4	43
Arizona.....	2,459.0	752	23	5.9	17
Arkansas.....	1,149.1	623	45	6.0	14
California.....	15,163.8	928	6	6.7	4
Colorado.....	2,181.7	830	14	5.9	17
Connecticut.....	1,663.8	1,056	2	6.3	12
Delaware.....	418.0	883	7	7.0	2
District of Columbia...	659.6	1,305	1	5.5	28
Florida.....	7,729.7	736	24	6.5	7
Georgia.....	3,916.5	772	19	5.0	34
Hawaii.....	603.0	723	26	6.6	5
Idaho.....	597.8	618	47	6.6	5
Illinois.....	5,773.7	877	9	6.0	14
Indiana.....	2,883.9	706	31	4.6	42
Iowa.....	1,441.9	667	36	6.5	7
Kansas.....	1,317.5	668	35	5.9	17
Kentucky.....	1,761.9	679	33	5.3	31
Louisiana.....	1,890.3	658	39	4.9	38
Maine.....	600.9	661	38	4.8	40
Maryland.....	2,506.0	879	8	5.8	21
Massachusetts.....	3,169.2	1,007	4	5.6	26
Michigan.....	4,348.5	835	12	3.3	50
Minnesota.....	2,635.3	835	12	7.5	1
Mississippi.....	1,116.7	586	49	4.8	40
Missouri.....	2,670.4	709	30	4.9	38
Montana.....	409.3	572	51	4.2	44
Nebraska.....	891.8	648	41	5.7	24
Nevada.....	1,186.1	768	20	6.5	7
New Hampshire.....	624.0	840	11	6.5	7
New Jersey.....	3,964.7	1,001	5	5.7	24
New Mexico.....	773.2	645	42	5.0	34
New York.....	8,466.9	1,016	3	5.8	21
North Carolina.....	3,844.9	714	29	5.2	32
North Dakota.....	326.2	599	48	6.4	11
Ohio.....	5,350.3	754	22	5.9	17
Oklahoma.....	1,458.8	627	44	5.0	34
Oregon.....	1,623.5	719	27	3.5	48
Pennsylvania.....	5,573.2	796	16	6.0	14
Rhode Island.....	482.6	765	21	3.5	48
South Carolina.....	1,811.0	655	40	5.0	34
South Dakota.....	371.2	581	50	3.9	47
Tennessee.....	2,704.3	728	25	5.5	28
Texas.....	9,479.9	800	15	6.1	13
Utah.....	1,100.6	664	37	5.2	32
Vermont.....	304.7	676	34	2.3	51
Virginia.....	3,568.2	841	10	6.9	3
Washington.....	2,718.0	790	17	4.1	45
West Virginia.....	695.4	620	46	5.6	26
Wisconsin.....	2,755.2	719	27	5.4	30
Wyoming.....	247.9	641	43	4.1	45

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Ranking does not include Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(5) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.